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Chapter Design Awards



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Office for Global Architecture (Leslie Neblett, John Herrera)

Visions of the Waterfront:
POSTCARDS
FROM THE 21st CENTURY

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Honors for Santiago Calatrava, Antenna Group, Caples Jefferson Architects, Jaron Lanier, Maya Lin,
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Cornejo, Pablo Nealon, and Gustavo Vazquez; FTL Happold, I-Beam Design, Charlotte Lardinois and
Thomas Wuetrich; and Morris/Sato Studio. Projects for the new century by Fox & Fowle; Architecture
Research Office; Raimund Abraham; Diller+Scofidio; Wayne Berg; Steven Holl; Skidmore, Owings &
Merrill; Davis Brody Bond; Tod Williams, Billie Tsien and Associates; Janson Goldstein.

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IN THE STREETSCAPE

Starrett Lehigh Building with new projects by the Hut Sachs Studio, Gboyega Designworks,
Ghislaine Vinas Interiors, Robin Kramer, Sidnam Petrone Gartner, Robert Lyon, Bogdanow Associates,
Ludwig Michael Goldsmith, Corjan Associates Architects, Charles Green, Maria Hellerstein,
Danielle Bokor, Robert Marino, Daniel Rowen Architect, and MSM Architects.

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IN THE GALLERIES

Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies, at the Storefront for Art and Architecture, featuring
projects by Todd MacDonald, the Brooklyn Architects Collaborative, Life in Hell, Sommer and Miller
Architecture and Planning, Briggs Knowles architecture + design, InLine Studio, Ana Flores-Cecilia
Benitez, Marpillero Pollak Architects, Studio a/b, Design+Urbanism.

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AT THE PODIUM

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Tupu, and the Michael Sorkin Studio.

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Goldsmith is taking a more contextual (and architectural) approach to the facade, where new limestone pilasters descending from the vertical accents above will mark the entrance. **Danielle Bokor's** bathrooms throughout the building have hanging blue halogen fixtures and navy blue tile walls accented with red, yellow, and aqua squares. They mediate nicely between the building's industrial past and high-tech present.

While internet startups move into smaller spaces (some designed by **Robert Marino**, who did Tomar Photography Studios), **Daniel Rowen Architect** is turning a sensational 100,000-square foot ninth floor space shaped like a basilica—with colonnades marching toward the Hudson, under clerestory windows—for Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia. The Hugo Boss company, which will occupy a space one floor below (designed by **MSM Architects**), has reserved a terrace on the second level of Martha's space.

Not surprisingly, loft space in the building which rented for between \$6 and \$8 per square foot has tripled and quadrupled in price. Despite the fact that the West Chelsea art gallery district now encroaches from two sides, the old real estate adage "location, location, location" isn't the only cause for the increase. Timing is the very major factor here and, for once, architectural character also weighs in big time.—*J.M.*

Developing Strategies for Hell's Kitchen South

by Todd Bressi

Rarely are the failures of architectural theory (or of fashion) which pretends to be urbanism demonstrated as effectively as they were last fall during the nearly simultaneous exhibition of the IFCCA competition schemes for the West Side rail yards and the community-sponsored proposals for an area of Hell's Kitchen just north of the yards. While Phyllis Lambert's jet-set IFCCA (International Foundation of the Canadian Centre for Architecture) salon chose an almost-empty 70-acre site as its millennial tableau, the community-sponsored study (on view in December at Storefront for Art and Architecture) addressed a more complex and more revealing situation.

Hell's Kitchen South is bounded by 34th and 42nd streets (between Eighth Avenue and the Hudson River) and it tends to be passed over by architectural and planning advocates. It has neither the cachet of the waterfront (since the Javits Center commandeers five riverfront blocks) nor the constituency of places like Harlem. The area is tangled in the spaghetti-like Lincoln Tunnel approaches and Port Authority Bus Terminal ramps, while an active railroad trench arcs beneath the street grid.

In recent years, a residential constituency has emerged and organized as the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association (HKNA), but bigger change is on the horizon. Supposedly, developers are salivating over the area because of the imminent new Penn Station, Hudson River

Park, and plans for expanding the convention center, extending a subway line, inserting a light-rail line, and building a stadium over the rail yards.

The twelve proposals in the *Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies* exhibit attempted to capitalize on those forces and undo some of the environmental degradation that has occurred. The Design Trust for Public Space gave HKNA support for the project and engaged the firm Design+Urbanism to organize the design studies as well as community workshops.

This was no "not-in-my-backyard" exercise. The community, as least as embodied in HKNA, is open to change and to considering the agendas of the Javits Center officials, the Port Authority, and local business people. The proposals tackled familiar issues such as mixing uses, rethinking public space, and improving environmental conditions. However, instead of offering "either/or" propositions, they suggested an urbanism rooted in flexibility, calibration, and coexistence—conveying a freshness and edge that seemed grounded in the place. (There was no sense that they had just dropped in bleary-eyed from Canada, Columbus, or the Netherlands.)

The bigness of the Javits Center—for example—was confronted, not romanticized. It was broken down, reorganized, or extended to serve a broader range of purposes. **Todd MacDonald's** proposal made a persuasive case that the eventual Javits Center expansion might be scaled to the existing block pattern. Or, **Brooklyn Architects Collaborative** would configure additions as smaller buildings scattered throughout the

Hells Kitchen South,
Brooklyn Architects
Collaborative



area. These structures would double as community facilities when not in use for shows.

What to do about the existing Javits structure? Brooklyn Architects Collaborative called for modest architectural and programming adjustments: a public galleria penetrating along the 35th Street axis would link to the waterfront and a new pier. Another solution, which was suggested also by a group called **Life in Hell**, reactivated the street, lining the edges of the convention hall with residences, hotels, or commercial space.

The proposals for public space were largely opportunistic, seizing on vacant lots and underused streets—even traffic islands, walls, and roofs. The team of **Sommer and Miller Architecture and Planning** suggested mid-block cut-throughs (placed seemingly randomly) that would translate Hell’s Kitchen’s jarring visual and spatial juxtapositions into a formal strategy for organizing smaller-scale blocks and community spaces. Others proposed parks over Dyer Avenue (**Briggs Knowles Architecture + Design**) and the tunnel approaches (**InLine Studio**). Or they spun greenways out of various rail cuts, easements, viaducts, and leftover sites (**Ana Flores-Cecilia Benitez, Marpillero Pollak Architects**). **Studio a/b** suggested these as spaces for markets.

One of the biggest problems Hell’s Kitchen will face is accommodating the Midtown-scaled development that may one day flow west. In planning for “density absorbers” (as Marilyn Jordan Taylor called these developments at one community meeting), a contrast in scale was favored. Proposals aligned big-bulk buildings along 34th and 42nd streets (**Marpillero Pollak, Flores-Benitez**). Along the tun-

nel approach ramps, new building types might include space for the communications industry and parking (**InLine Studio**). What will come of this? Design+Urbanism is synthesizing the proposals—along with concurrent research on topics like planning, zoning, and building typologies. D+U’s **Michael Conard** and **David Smiley** say the neighborhood association might urge the community board to collaborate on a 197a plan or use the recommendations to negotiate with landowners and developers.

But that is not likely to be enough. Unfortunately, 197a plans are merely advisory, and negotiations with developers usually focus on a circumscribed range of issues. The Design Trust should advance its investigation and consider strategies for reshuffling the deck. The most urgent challenge is not cultivating creative planning ideas but establishing vehicles that give the community the capacity, resources, and power to initiate change on its own.

By identifying design possibilities, the exhibition offered a blueprint for change. One strategy might include organizing a public/private consortium to manage the non-traditional public spaces and green spaces that could emerge. Another might involve creating a development group (of housing advocates, manufacturers, merchants, and community leaders) to build mixed-use, flex-space buildings. Or, a joint HKNA-Javits Center subsidiary could develop and operate buildings to be shared by the community and conventioners. Imagine the architectural possibilities this could unleash.

As the Design Trust becomes an established community planning laboratory, it should

take care to assemble its efforts into an evolving base of city design knowledge. Every year, another insightful urban design study bursts onto the scene only to fade like a shooting star, with little sense that lessons are transferred from one to the next. How did the Regional Plan Association’s proposals for this very same neighborhood, for Envisioning East New York, and for Crosstown 116 influence these designers?

Ironically, the IFCCA competition is likely to be successful in this regard. The proposals will be enshrined in splashy monographs about the participating firms—their every nuance to be pored over by students for semesters to come. Instead, let’s hope that Hell’s Kitchen South one day becomes a living laboratory of twenty-first century urbanism and architecture, a must-see stop on any tour of thriving urban places.

Visions of the Waterfront

by Jayne Merkel

At the South Street Seaport Museum, which was as close to the water as you would want to be on a cold and rainy night, Michael Sorkin and two pairs of young architects described ideas of what the city’s last underdeveloped resource, the waterfront, could become. The October 19 forum was sponsored by the Van Alen Institute.

Philippe Baumann and **Karl Jensen**, of the Committee for Clouds and Sun, showed a packet of postcards they submitted (with **Leslie Neblett** and **John Herrera**, of the Office for Global Architecture) as their entry to the Van Alen Institute’s East River Competition. “We tried to look at the river as a whole and see what effect it has on the city,” they explained. The first thing the designers noticed was that the

river was misnamed. “It runs through the city,” Jensen noted. The East River is “actually west of the two largest boroughs,” so they renamed it the Middle River “to get out of the Manhattancentric point of view.”

Baumann, Jensen, and their collaborators extended the idea of lining the river with an “emerald necklace” to link all the city’s parks so “someone in Washington Heights going to JFK would be able to ride his bike.” The idea was to envision “the city as pockets within a larger park rather than parks as pockets within the city,” Jensen said.

Postcards provided the group an opportunity to create a fictional narrative. In their scenario the “Interboro Park Authority” is commemorating its fiftieth anniversary, and the postcards depict its achievements. Baumann showed slides of the cards as he elaborated on their meaning. One image showed parkland on an abandoned railroad bed in the Bronx. A “rush hour” slide portrayed people bicycling through a forest, and he showed a huge new public swimming pool at Riker’s Island. Other postcards illustrated croquet gardens in Astoria, Peregrine falcons roosting in a corporate office tower, the “P-line subway” (linking parks), the “five kinds of cheese” produced in New York parks, and a Seurat-like landscape of crowds on a grassy knoll at “Middle Park” (the park along Middle River).

The winners of the Van Alen Institute’s East River competition, **Victoria Marshall** and **Steven Tupu**, then showed “Till,” their proposal to create a series of usable parks constructed from different waste products. Marshall is a landscape designer with her own projects in Greece and New